



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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### FIELD MICE INVADE APPLE ORCHARD AS FARMER REQUESTS HELP FROM SURVEY

When a New Jersey farmer visited his apple orchard recently and found that field mice had injured more than 350 trees, he telephoned Bureau of Biological Survey officials in Washington for help. Two days later an expert from the Biological Survey's Division of Predator and Rodent Control was personally inspecting the orchard and recommending practices to prevent further damage to the trees.

The damage was done, Survey experts believe, during a 2-week period when 12 inches of snow covered the ground. The mice had completely girdled the trees. Nearly all the tap roots had been removed, and some trees had been cut off at the bottom. It is not unusual for mice to damage fruit trees, it was explained.

Orchards are often damaged by meadow and pine mice, the control experts added, but with correct preventive measures the damage can be avoided.

All orchardists should examine their farms before the onset of winter. If traces of mice are seen, control measures should be instituted immediately, since most damage by rodents occurs during winter.

Meadow and pine mice are the only kinds of mice known to girdle trees. Each leaves distinct signs showing their presence. Both species are trail builders. Meadow mice are extensive surface trail builders and can be seen by the runways they have under grass cover. If trails are found under the grass precautionary measures should be taken.

Pine mice are more active as tunnel diggers and characteristically damage the trees by eating the roots. Unlike that of meadow mice, the presence of pine mice is not so easily discovered although these mice do construct a limited number of trails under vegetative cover.

Many farmers attempt to prevent damage to their trees by making a 3-foot clearing around the trunk of each tree, but few orchardists realize that when snow covers the ground the mice will burrow under the snow and thus cross the apparently protective "clearing."

To prevent damage to fruit trees, orchardists are advised to inspect their trees carefully each fall. If the presence of rodents is suspected the farmers should consult their Agriculture Extension agents or the Bureau of Biological Survey's rodent-control workers.